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# THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

AND

## CIVIL SERVICE REFORM.

A PAPER

READ AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF

### THE NATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE REFORM LEAGUE.

DECEMBER 17, 1897.

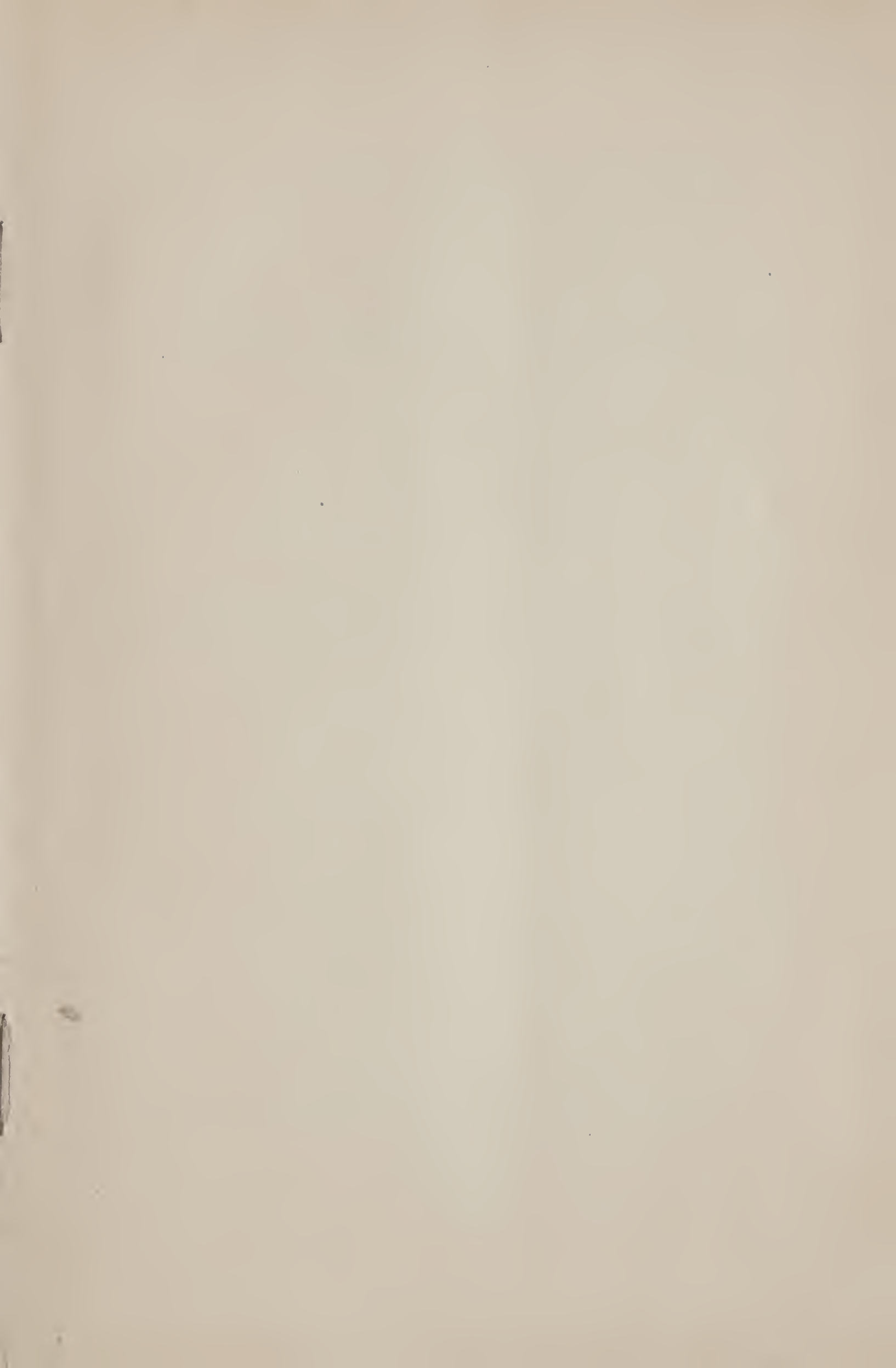
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## THE REPUBLICAN PARTY AND CIVIL SERVICE REFORM.

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*A Paper read at the Annual Meeting of the National  
Civil Service Reform League, at Cincinnati, Ohio,  
December 17, 1897.*

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BY HENRY HITCHCOCK.

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Fifteen years, less one month, have now elapsed since the statute was enacted, which embedded in the framework and administrative policy of the national government the wholesome doctrine that public office is a public trust, and that public servants, charged with subordinate administrative duties, ought to be appointed, not because of political opinions, nor as a reward for partisan service, but for merit and fitness alone. That great legislative event was thus recorded in the Address of President Curtis, at the second annual meeting of this League:

“On the 16th of January, 1883, upon the earnest recommendation of the President, and by overwhelming majorities in Congress, the Pendleton bill became a law, and on the 16th of July, 1883, amid the general applause of the country, it went into effect.”

That doctrine was not new. The fathers of the republic not only proclaimed but practiced it, as an axiom of political morals. Washington required of applicants for office proofs of ability, integrity and fitness. “Beyond this,” he said, “nothing with me is necessary or will be of any avail to them in my decision.” In at least one historic instance he preferred for appointment an avowed political opponent to a valued personal friend, upon the express

ground that the latter did not possess the business qualifications of the former. Jefferson proclaimed it on the threshold of his first administration, declaring that of the thousands of officers in the United States a very few individuals only,—probably not twenty—would be removed, and these only for doing what they ought not to have done. Again, in his famous letter to the merchants of New Haven, he declared that the only questions concerning a candidate should be,—“Is he honest? Is he capable? Is he faithful to the Constitution?” And Madison, Monroe and John Quincy Adams so faithfully followed their example that the Joint Congressional Committee upon Retrenchment reported, in 1868, that after having consulted all accessible means of information they had not learned of a single removal of a subordinate officer except for cause, from the beginning of Washington’s administration to the close of that of John Quincy Adams,—a period of forty years.

It is not the purpose of this paper to trace the steps by which, during the succeeding forty years, a very different doctrine gained ascendancy and an opposite practice came to prevail. The history of the spoils system, its corrupting tendencies and the menace which it involves to the perpetuity of our government, are unhappily familiar to every student of American politics,—to none more than the members of this League, whose privilege and delight it was, year by year, to listen to the annual addresses of our lamented President, distinguished alike for their historic accuracy and fullness, their persuasive and manly eloquence and their captivating literary form. Those addresses, and other papers, not less brilliant and memorable, prepared by Mr. Curtis from the year 1869 up to the organization of this League, in August, 1881, contain also—and not only contain but to an important degree constitute,—the history of the struggle to overthrow the spoils system which began in

1867, and after fifteen years of determined effort, of varying success and frequent disappointment, was crowned with the sanction of law in 1883.

That Act, substantially unchanged, and, as we rejoice to know, honestly enforced, stands upon the statute book to-day. But the struggle and the conflict are not ended. Both before and since its enactment, in Congress and among the people at large, able men of all political parties have enlisted on one or the other side of the controversy. During all these thirty years, in presidential messages and declarations of policy, in Congressional debates and in the successive platforms of the great political parties, the reform of the civil service, the mischiefs and dangers of the spoils system and the methods by which they ought to be prevented, have been conspicuous topics. In Congress efforts have again and again been made, hitherto always unsuccessful, to repeal the Civil Service Act of 1883, or to destroy its efficiency by refusing the necessary appropriations, in which members of both the great parties have joined.

In March last, a new Administration assumed the reins of government, and within the past ten days the 55th Congress has assembled for its first regular session. The election of its candidate for President in 1896, and of a large majority in the House of Representatives, assures to the Republican party, if not the absolute control of the legislation of this Congress, at any rate the power to prevent the repeal or modification of any existing law. Scarcely had that Administration assumed the responsibilities of office, and while the new Congress was occupied with questions of revenue legislation whose urgency had induced the President to call an extra session, when the formation of an anti-civil service reform league was loudly announced. During that extra session speeches were made, both in the

Senate and the House, by members of that party, elaborately and savagely attacking and misrepresenting not only the methods and provisions of the Civil Service Act, but the principles upon which it is based. And, if the press reports are correct, on the second day of the regular session which begun last week, the deliberations of the House as to the proper reference of the various portions of the President's annual message were interrupted and delayed by speeches from two members, one a Democratic representative from Alabama, the other elected as a Republican from Ohio, both bitterly denouncing the Civil Service Act, advocating the abandonment of the merit system, and taking issue with the President's statement that it has the approval of the people.

Under these circumstances, the actual relation of the Republican party to civil service reform and the probable or even possible attitude of that party towards the system now established by law, are questions not only germane to the objects of this League but which may well receive the earnest consideration of its members, and of the people at large.

How shall those questions be answered? By what rules may we reasonably forecast the attitude of any political party? By what test may we fairly determine the obligations and gauge the fidelity of its members, especially of those whom it has placed in office,—above all, those who have been elected to the State or National Legislature, as fit and loyal representatives of the party policy? Obviously we must look, we can only look, to the formal declarations of its policy publicly made by that party through its authorized or official representatives, and to the public or official acts of its recognized leaders. Thus only can the policy of any party be made known. Only by accepting that test can any party organization reasonably or honorably claim public

confidence or support. Doubtless any political party may change its policy; for party organization is only a means to an end, and every citizen, under a government of the people, is free at any time to adopt in good faith whatever political views or principles may commend themselves to his judgment and to support whatever party best represents those views. These are mere truisms. But it follows from them that no political party which has come into power by professing certain principles or proclaiming a given policy as its own, can consistently or honorably abandon those principles or repudiate that policy and still hold fast to the power or deserve the confidence and support thus gained. And what is true of the party is true of each one of its official representatives, since it can speak and act through them alone.

Above all is it true of the legislator who owes his seat, and his share in the law-making power, to the confidence of the people in the pledges of his party. When the question is not merely of methods, as to which a large discretion must be allowed, but of the substantial fulfillment or the repudiation of those pledges, the man of honor can have but one choice,—he must fulfill those pledges or he must resign.

What position, then, has the Republican party of the United States publicly taken in respect of civil service reform? What policy has it announced, what pledges has it given through its authorized representatives?

The platform, or formal declaration of its policy, adopted by the National Republican Convention at St. Louis, on June 18, 1896, by a vote of 818½ to 105½, leaves no doubt on that point.

I quote from that platform as follows:

“The Civil Service law was placed on the statute book by the Republican party, which has always sustained it, and we renew our repeated declarations that it shall be thor-

oughly and honestly enforced and extended wherever practicable.”

The concluding paragraph of that official document, referring to each and all of the declarations which preceded it, was as follows :

“Such are the principles and policies of the Republican party. By these principles we will abide, and these policies we will put into execution. We ask for them the considerate judgment of the American people.”

That Convention having nominated William McKinley as the Republican candidate for the Presidency at the election in November, 1896, this declaration of the party policy was officially communicated to him with the tender of said nomination. On August 26, 1896, he formally accepted the nomination in a letter to the Notification Committee, in which he considered in detail the “questions at issue in the pending campaign.” From that letter I quote as follows :

“The pledge of the Republican National Convention that our civil service laws ‘shall be sustained and thoroughly and honestly enforced, and extended wherever practicable,’ is in keeping with the position of the party for the past twenty-four years and will be faithfully observed. Our opponents decry these reforms. They appear to be willing to abandon all the advantages gained after so many years’ agitation and effort. They encourage a return to methods of party favoritism which both parties have often denounced, that experience has condemned, and that the people have repeatedly disapproved. The Republican party earnestly opposes this reactionary and entirely unjustifiable policy. It will take no backward step on this question. It will seek to improve, but never to degrade the public service.”

The National Democratic Convention which met at Chicago on July 7, 1896, accepted the issue thus tendered. The civil service plank in that platform, while characteristically ambiguous, denounced what was called, “Life tenure in the

Civil Service," and it is a matter of political history that the Democratic candidate for President and his supporters proclaimed their determination, if they should obtain control of the Government, to abolish the system established by the Civil Service Act of 1883. There was no doubt in the public mind, when the general elections of 1896 were held, what was the position of either party upon the question of civil service reform.

Upon the issues thus made up, the contending parties went to the country. The American people responded by electing William McKinley President of the United States by a plurality of 573,000 and a clear majority over all opponents of about 258,000 votes. The unqualified promise of the Republican party, not only to sustain but to honestly enforce and extend the existing civil service law, was accepted by the people.

On March 4, 1897, President McKinley, on taking the oath of office, made the customary Inaugural Address, setting forth the policy of his Administration. From this I quote the following passage relating to the civil service:

"Reforms in the civil service must go on, but the change should be real and genuine, not perfunctory, or prompted by a zeal in behalf of any party, simply because it happens to be in power. As a member of Congress I voted and spoke in favor of the present law, and I shall attempt its enforcement in the spirit in which it was enacted. The purpose in view was to secure the most efficient service of the best men who would accept appointment under the government, retaining faithful and devoted public servants in office, but shielding none under the authority of any rule or custom who are inefficient, incompetent or unworthy. The best interests of the country demand this, and the people heartily approve the law wherever and whenever it has been thus administered."

These declarations, I need hardly remind you, are in

complete harmony with the utterances and the votes of President McKinley during his long and distinguished service in the House of Representatives. Of those utterances, one illustration will suffice. In 1890, the most strenuous attempt of all was made to cripple the operation of the Civil Service Act by cutting down the appropriations necessary to carry it into effect. Mr. McKinley, then Chairman of the House Committee of Ways and Means, successfully led the opposition in a speech from which I quote as follows:

“ Mr. Chairman, if the Republican party of this country is pledged to any one thing more than another, it is the maintenance of the civil service law and to its efficient execution — not only that, but to its enlargement and its further application to the public service.

“ The law that stands upon our statute books to-day was put there by Republican votes. It was a Republican measure. Every national platform of the Republican party, since its enactment, has declared not only in favor of its continuance in full vigor, but in favor of its enlargement so as to apply more generally to the public service. And this, Mr. Chairman, is not alone the declaration and purpose of the Republican party, but it is in accordance with its highest and best sentiment — aye, more, it is sustained by the best sentiment of the whole country, Republican and Democratic alike.”

It is well known that since his inauguration the President has carried out these pledges with characteristic integrity. It is said that strong efforts have been made to induce him to modify the civil service regulations in a sense unfriendly to genuine reform: but if so, such efforts have failed. Suggestions respectfully submitted to the President, on behalf of this League, touching the practical working of the Act and apparently desirable amendments to the civil service rules, have been received and considered in a frank and cordial spirit most gratifying to your representatives.

Two important amendments to the civil service rules have been promulgated by the President.

Rule II, relating to dismissals from office, has been amended in a very important respect by adding the following:

“No removal shall be made from any position subject to competitive examination except for just cause and upon written charges filed with the head of the Department, or other appointing officer, and of which the accused shall have full notice and an opportunity to make defense.”

This amendment has met the hearty approbation of the friends of the reform. It is manifestly just, and is an additional safeguard against the arbitrary dismissal of meritorious employees, really for political reasons, but upon some other pretext, while avoiding the opposite danger of restricting the indispensable power of prompt removal where just cause exists.

Rule VI, which prescribes exceptions from the requirements of examination or registration, is amended, as to the custom-house service, by extending to all customs districts and to each sub-port or station, the exemption of one chief or principal deputy or assistant collector, heretofore confined to customs districts whose employees numbered one hundred and fifty or more; and as to the internal revenue service, by extending the exemption, already in force, of one employee in each internal revenue district who shall act as cashier or chief deputy or assistant collector, so as to include also one deputy collector in each internal revenue district where the number of employees in the collector's office exceeds four, and one deputy collector in each stamp or branch office. But this rule as amended, further provides that all appointments to the positions in the customs and internal revenue service excepted by this rule shall be subject to an examination to be prescribed by the Secretary

of the Treasury, not disapproved by the Civil Service Commission, equal to the examination held by said commission for positions of like grade, such examinations to be conducted by the Commission, in accordance with its regulations.

All the amendments above mentioned were recommended by the Secretary of the Treasury, and approved by the Civil Service Commission.

In entire harmony with these official acts and declarations, the first Annual Message of President McKinley, received by Congress on the 6th of this month, included among other topics the further improvement of the civil service, renewing his pledges to that end. And while referring to the power of removal for incompetency or inefficiency as a vital safeguard to the reform, the President again declared his conviction that the system has the approval of the people, and his purpose to uphold and extend it.

If, as I have assumed, the true attitude and policy of a great political party, and the obligations to the people at large which it accepts by seeking and gaining success at the polls, are to be judged by the formal declarations and pledges of its authorized representatives, by the political issues which it tenders to its opponents and by the official acts and declarations of those who, in its name and through its support, have been charged with the responsibilities of government,—then the inquiry as to the present attitude and obligations of the Republican party of the United States, in respect of the conduct of the civil service, the honest enforcement and extension of the existing civil service law, the faithful application of the merit system to appointments and removals from administrative offices, and the unflinching opposition to the spoils system which that implies, is fully answered by the acts and declarations above stated. If the Republican party,

and the men who on the faith of its promises have been entrusted by the people of the United States with the conduct of the government, are not pledged to these things, to what are they pledged? In no partisan spirit, but as a citizen who values the immense power of party organization in proportion as it is honestly used for worthy ends, I rejoice that such an answer can be made to that inquiry,—still more in the assurance afforded by the exalted personal character and honorable public career of the President, that these pledges will be faithfully kept.

Such is the present attitude of the Republican party in relation to civil service reform. But the history and traditions of a great party count for much in any horoscope of its future. As we have seen, that party, at the opening of the campaign of 1896, in submitting its principles and policy to the considerate judgment of the American people, not only claimed for itself the authorship of the Civil Service Act of 1883, and the credit of having always sustained it, but referred to its repeated declarations, once more renewed, that it “shall be thoroughly and honestly enforced and extended wherever practicable.”

It may be of interest to briefly recall the facts which support that claim, with some reference to events which preceded them, in which prominent Republicans took part. And in so doing, I desire to acknowledge with sincere thanks the valuable data furnished me by the indefatigable and thoroughly well-informed Secretary of the League.

As already stated, the enactment of the civil service law of 1883 was the culmination of a struggle which really began in Congress in 1867. Three years earlier, in 1864, that eminent Republican, Charles Sumner, of Massachusetts, introduced in the Senate the first civil service reform bill; but it was not seriously discussed or acted upon in either House.

In January, 1867, Thomas A. Jenckes, an able and prominent Republican member of the House from Rhode Island, presented an elaborate report from the Joint Committee on Retrenchment of the 39th Congress, embodying a vast amount of authentic information, including the experience of foreign governments, concerning the proper conduct of the civil service, and advocating its reform substantially on the lines since adopted. In May, 1868, in the 40th Congress, Mr. Jenckes presented a second report, accompanied by a bill to regulate the civil service, which was made a special order for a subsequent day. The facts and principles set forth in these two reports, covering three hundred printed pages, were supported by Mr. Jenckes in speeches of great force, and furnished data of great value to the Civil Service Commission of 1871: but it was seed time, too early for harvest, and his party did not commit itself to the measure. But the seed was sown, the education of public sentiment began, and one of its earliest and most valuable lessons was contained in the masterly address of George William Curtis before the American Social Science Association in October, 1869, upon civil service reform.

In March, 1869, President Grant's first term began. In his annual message of December, 1870, he earnestly called the attention of Congress to the necessity of a reform in the civil service, declaring that no duty so much embarrassed the executive and heads of departments as that of appointments, that no such arduous and thankless labor was imposed upon Senators and Representatives as that of finding places for constituents, that the existing system did not secure the best men, and often not even fit men for public places, and that the elevation and purification of the civil service would be hailed with approval by the whole people of the United States.

During the last week of that session of Congress, ending March 3, 1871, Senator Trumbull, of Illinois, introduced a bill which went to the House in the form of an amendment to the pending appropriation bill. It passed both Houses, and was approved by the President on the same day, March 3. This bill, now known as Section 1753 of the Revised Statutes, was as follows:

“The President is authorized to prescribe such regulations for the admission of persons into the civil service of the United States as may best promote the efficiency thereof and ascertain the fitness of each candidate in respect to age, health, character, knowledge, and ability for the branch of service into which he seeks to enter; and for this purpose he may employ suitable persons to conduct such inquiries, and may prescribe their duties, and establish regulations for the conduct of persons who may receive appointments in the civil service.”

It may fairly be said that in passing this bill, the Republican party, under the leadership of President Grant, whatever its subsequent shortcomings, distinctly took ground in favor of the reform, and President Grant during the next three years gave it his earnest support.

On March 4th, 1871, he appointed an excellent commission, with George William Curtis at its head, to prescribe rules for carrying the Act into effect. On December 18, 1871, the Commission presented its report, prepared by Mr. Curtis, with appropriate rules, which the President adopted, at once transmitting the report to Congress by special message, announcing his purpose to faithfully execute the rules, and asking for all the strength which Congress could give him to carry out the reforms proposed.

In April, 1872, the Advisory Board appointed by the President under these rules made a further report, grouping various offices, and accompanied by further regulations, which were at once adopted and promulgated by executive

order. In his annual message in December, 1872, the President, referring to the abuses which had grown up through appointments to office as a reward of political service, again declared his purpose to apply these rules so as to secure the greatest possible reform in the civil service, and recommended legislation to make them permanent. In his annual message of December, 1873, he again commended the reform to Congress, recommending the appointment of a committee of Congress to act with the Civil Service Board in devising permanent rules, "which will secure the services of honest and capable officials and which will also protect them in a degree of independence while in office."

In his annual message of December, 1874, the President again commended the reform to Congress, stating that the effect of the civil service rules was beneficial, and tended to elevate the service, but that it was impracticable to maintain them without direct and positive support of Congress: further stating that if Congress should adjourn without positive legislation on the subject he would regard such action as a disapproval of the system and that competitive examinations would be abandoned. Congress did adjourn without such action, and for the time the progress of the reform was arrested.

Meanwhile the growth of public sentiment in favor of the reform produced its effect upon the Republican party at large and even among certain of its leaders who would gladly have seen it fail. The National Republican platform of 1872 contained the following declaration:

"Any system of the civil service under which the subordinate positions of the Government are considered rewards for mere party zeal is fatally demoralizing, and we therefore favor a reform of the system by laws which shall abolish the evils of patronage and make honesty, efficiency,

and fidelity the essential qualifications for public positions, without practically creating a life tenure of office.”

The Republican platform of 1876, reported by Senator Hawley, of Connecticut, and unanimously adopted, contained the following:

“Under the constitution the President and heads of departments are to make nominations for office; the Senate is to advise and consent to appointments, and the House of Representatives is to accuse and prosecute faithless officers. The best interest of the public service demands that these distinctions be respected: that Senators and Representatives who may be judges and accusers should not dictate appointments to office. The invariable rule in appointments should have reference to the honesty, fidelity and capacity of the appointees, giving to the party in power those places where harmony and vigor of administration require its policy to be represented, but permitting all others to be filled by persons selected with sole reference to the efficiency of the public service, and the right of all citizens to share in the honor of rendering faithful service to the country.”

In March, 1877, President Hayes was inaugurated. In his Inaugural Address he dwelt upon the paramount necessity of reform in the civil service, referring to the platforms of both the Republican and the Democratic parties in 1876, as expressing the united voice and will of the whole country and virtually pledging both parties to give it their unreserved support. His first annual message in December, 1877, dwelt at length on the subject and urged an appropriation to enable the Civil Service Commission to continue its work. Mr. Curtis having resigned from the Commission in 1875, Mr. Dorman B. Eaton was subsequently appointed its chairman, and in May, 1877, at the request of the President, but at his own expense, visited England, studied the civil service system there, and subsequently published the result of his researches in his well-

known and valuable Report entitled, "Civil Service in Great Britain." But that Congress failed to respond to the President's request, and his annual Message of December, 1879, again urged, at still greater length, the necessity of the reform, strongly denouncing the evils of a partisan spoils system, and referring to the repeated recommendations of President Grant, the salutary results of the competitive system established by the Civil Service Commission of 1871, and the additional testimony in favor of that system furnished by the reports of the Secretary of the Interior, the Postmaster General, and the postmasters and collectors in New York and other large cities, where it was still maintained. I need not remind you with what firmness and complete practical success the Secretary of the Interior under President Hayes, now the honored and worthy successor of George William Curtis as President of this League, exemplified the methods and the benefits of genuine civil service reform throughout his department, during his entire term of office.

In June, 1880, the Republican National Convention adopted, without a division, as part of its official declaration of party principles and purposes, the following:

"The Republican party, adhering to principles affirmed by its last National Convention of respect for the Constitutional rules covering appointments to office, adopts the declaration of President Hayes that the reform of the civil service should be thorough, radical and complete. To this end it demands the co-operation of the Legislative with the Executive Department of the Government, and that Congress shall so legislate that fitness, ascertained by proper, practical tests, shall admit to the public service."

President Hayes' last message, in December, 1880, again recommended the reform of the civil service, especially in the method of appointment and removal by legislation; but no responsive legislation was had.

President Garfield, in his Inaugural Address, on March 4th, 1881, declaring that the civil service could never be placed on a satisfactory basis until it was regulated by law, announced his purpose, at the proper time, to ask Congress, for the good of the service and the protection of executive officers and employees, to legislate concerning appointments and removals. This purpose was defeated by his untimely and tragic death in September following. But his deliberate and public utterances in Congress and elsewhere, long previously made, leave no doubt as to what his recommendations would have been. Seldom, in brief compass, have the evils of what he described as "the corrupting doctrine that 'to the victors belong the spoils,' shamelessly announced as an article of political faith and practice," been more clearly pointed out than by General Garfield in an elaborate article entitled "A Century of Congress," published in the *Atlantic Monthly* for June, 1877.

The first session of the 47th Congress began on December 5th, 1881, the Senate being composed of 37 Republicans, 37 Democrats, 1 Independent and 1 Readjuster; and the House, of 290 members, of whom 150 were Republicans and 140 Democrats, with three vacant seats. President Arthur's first message, received on December 6th, discussed at length the plans proposed for the reform of the civil service. Conceding the success of the competitive system in Great Britain, he expressed doubts as to the applicability of some features of that system to the civil service of the United States. But he stated that if Congress should establish competitive tests for admission to the service, no such doubts would deter him from giving the measure his earnest support, and earnestly recommended the appropriation of \$25,000.00 per annum for the enforcement of the Civil Service Act of 1871; promising, with such aid, to execute the provisions of that law according to its letter and

spirit. Congress responded by appropriating only \$15,000 for that purpose, under circumstances graphically told by Mr. Curtis in his first annual address as President of this League. To that address I must refer you for a characteristically brilliant sketch of the condition and prospects of the reform at that time, my present purpose being solely to state, as briefly as possible, the position of the Republican party through its representatives with reference to the reform.

On December 6, 1881, Mr. Pendleton, of Ohio, a Democrat, introduced in the Senate a bill bearing his name, but drafted by the Committee on Legislation of the New York Civil Service Reform Association, of which Mr. Dorman B. Eaton was chairman. And in January, another bill was introduced by Senator Dawes, of Massachusetts, a Republican, also looking to the substitution of merit for favor in minor appointments. These bills were referred to a committee, of which Senator Hawley of Connecticut, a Republican, was Chairman, which in May reported the Pendleton bill, somewhat amended, supporting it by a statement of the evils of the spoils system, a sketch of the movement for reform, and an appendix containing important testimony concerning the reformed methods pursued in the New York Custom-House and Post Office. At the same session, bills of like character were introduced in the House and referred to a select committee on reforms in the civil service, but not reported on; nor was the Pendleton bill further discussed in the Senate at that session.

During the summer and fall of 1882, the friends of the reform, notably the President and members of this League, redoubled their efforts to arouse public sentiment, in view of the general election to be held in November. The result is a matter of history, and was thus tersely described by Mr. Curtis in his Annual Address at your meeting in August, 1883:

“ The issue was plainly made and an appeal taken at the polls. The result of the election was startling and impressive. The most conspicuous enemies of reform were dismissed by their constituents from the public service, and although it is not always easy precisely to define the significance of a general election, it was universally conceded, that, whatever else the result might mean, it was a clear and decisive demand of the country for civil service reform. The response of Congress was immediate and never was the flexibility of a popular system more signally displayed.”

The significance of this statement lies in the fact that the Republicans elected in November to the 48th Congress numbered only 119, as against 150 in the 47th, while the number of Democrats rose from 140 to 201. I must again refer you to Mr. Curtis' address for an account, sparkling with characteristic humor and delicate sarcasm, of the progress of the Pendleton bill in both houses when the 47th Congress re-assembled. From the moment that Congress met, the mandate of the people still thundering in their ears, this question took precedence over all others. The President's message frankly urged its passage and promised his hearty co-operation in enforcing it. Within a week it was taken up in the Senate, and was passed on December 27th by 38 yeas to 5 nays; 23 Republicans, of whom Benjamin Harrison, of Indiana, was one, 14 Democrats and 1 Independent voting for, and 5 Democrats against it. In the House, on January 4th, Mr. Kasson, of Iowa, a Republican, and Chairman of the Civil Service Committee, reported the bill as passed by the Senate, without amendment. It was taken up under a suspension of the rules, thirty minutes debate allowed, and passed by 155 yeas to 47 nays; the affirmative vote being 100 Republicans, including William McKinley, 51 Democrats and 4 Independents: and the negative vote 39 Democrats, 7 Republicans and 1 Independent. Unquestionably the Republican party adopted and

passed the Pendleton Bill, and by passing it, they fulfilled, at last, the promises which Republican National Conventions had constantly made for ten years preceding.

President Arthur promptly fulfilled his own promise to give the reform system fair play by appointing as Commissioners Mr. Dorman B. Eaton of New York, Dr. J. M. Gregory of Illinois, and Judge L. D. Thoman of Ohio; the gentleman first named being well described by Mr. Curtis in the same address as "one of the ablest, sincerest and most devoted friends of the reform." On March 9, 1883, the Commission was organized, and in July the system went into operation: the places originally included in the classified service, by direction of the President, numbering 13,924.

The Republican National Convention of 1884 met at Chicago on June 3, after a year's experience of the working of the system. The platform unanimously recommended by the Committee on Resolutions, as reported by William McKinley, Jr., of Ohio, and adopted without dissent, contained the following:

"Reform of the civil service auspiciously begun under Republican administration, should be completed by the further extension of the reform system already established by law to all the grades of the service to which it is applicable. The spirit and purpose of the reform should be observed in all executive appointments, and all laws at variance with the objects of existing reform legislation should be repealed, to the end that the dangers to free institutions which lurk in the power of official patronage may be wisely and effectively avoided."

By the election of Mr. Cleveland as President in November, 1884, and of a clear majority of 21 in the House of Representatives of the 49th Congress, the Democratic party became responsible for the enforcement of the Civil Service Act during the next four years. The conduct of the civil

service during that period is not within the scope of this paper, but it may be noted that the number of classified places which during President Arthur's term had increased by natural growth to 15,573, was nearly doubled under President Cleveland: 7,259 being added by his orders, and 4,498 by natural growth, making a total of 27,320 at the close of his term. And the Democratic National Convention which, on June 5, 1888, at St. Louis, re-nominated Mr. Cleveland for the Presidency by acclamation, declared in its platform that "honest civil service reform has been inaugurated and maintained by President Cleveland and he has brought the public service to the highest standard of efficiency."

Two weeks later, on June 19, 1888, the Republican National Convention, at Chicago, met this challenge by nominating for President, Benjamin Harrison, who as a senator from Indiana had voted for the Pendleton bill in 1883, and against all subsequent efforts to repeal or cripple it, and by unanimously adopting a platform, from which I quote as follows:

"The men who abandoned the Republican party in 1884 and continue to adhere to the Democratic party, have deserted not only the cause of honest government, of sound finance, of freedom and purity of the ballot, but especially have deserted the cause of reform in the civil service. We will not fail to keep our pledges because they have broken theirs, or because their candidate has broken his. We therefore repeat our declaration of 1884, to wit: The reform of the civil service, auspiciously begun under the Republican Administration, should be completed by the further extension of the reform system, already established by law, to all the grades of the service to which it is applicable. The spirit and purpose of the reform should be observed in all executive appointments, and all laws at variance with the object of existing reform legislation should be repealed, to the end that the dangers to free institutions which lurk in the power of official patronage may be wisely and effectually avoided."

General Harrison, in his letter of acceptance, cordially approved "the clear and forcible expression of the Convention upon this subject," advocating further legislation to include other branches of the service, and declaring his sincere purpose, if elected, to advance the reform. He was elected President in November, 1888, and the Republican party, having a majority in both houses of the 51st Congress, again became responsible for carrying on the reform.

President Harrison's first annual message, of December 3, 1889, discussed at length the operation of the Act and certain criticisms thereon, suggesting certain improvements and recommending appropriations for an increase in the clerical force. In his subsequent messages the subject was discussed in a like spirit. During his term of office 15,598 places were added to the classified service, 8,690 by his orders and the remainder by natural growth. In 1891 the merit system was also applied by General Tracy, Secretary of the Navy, to the employees of the Government Navy Yards, by an admirable and effective order, which removed more than 5,000 places from the sphere of politics. It should be remarked here, to the credit of the succeeding administration, that in 1893 this order was continued in force by Secretary Herbert, and President Cleveland's order of May 6, 1896, which greatly enlarged the classified service, brought these and many other places for the first time within the civil service rules.

That the Republican party had not changed its position was manifested by the action of the Republican National Convention in June, 1892, over which Wm. McKinley, Jr., presided, in nominating Benjamin Harrison for re-election, and unanimously adopting as part of its platform the following:

"We commend the spirit and evidence of reform in the Civil Service, and the wise and consistent enforcement by the Republican party of the laws regulating the same."

To this the Democratic National Convention, meeting a few days later, responded by again nominating Mr. Cleveland for President, upon a platform declaring that public office is a public trust, affirming former demands for the reform of the civil service, and calling for the honest enforcement of all laws regulating the same. So far as platforms and public pledges went there was nothing to choose between the two great parties. In November, 1892, Mr. Cleveland was again elected President and the Democratic party once more became responsible for the reform. During his administration about 44,000 places were added to the classified service, including, however, the 5,000 Navy Yard employees affected by Secretary Tracy's order above mentioned, and 2,412 by natural growth.

At the date of the 13th annual report of the Civil Service Commission, January 30, 1897, the total approximate number of positions in the civil branch of the government, as stated in that report, was 178,717, of which 87,107 were in the classified service and 91,610 in the unclassified service; but of the number last mentioned about 5,500 are not classified, for reasons deemed best for the service, 4,800 are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, and nearly 8,900 are persons employed merely as laborers or workmen, leaving 72,371 places considered as classifiable but not yet classified, of whom 66,725 are Postmasters of the fourth class, who are appointed, and may be removed, by the Postmaster General. And this was in effect the status of the civil service in November, 1896, when both the great parties last went before the country, with the results already mentioned.

Well might the Republican candidate for the Presidency, in accepting his party's nomination for that great office, declare that its latest pledge was but in keeping with the position it had taken for the past twenty-four years. Each

one of the six Republican National Conventions which during that period announced the party policy, emblazoned this reform upon its banner. Every President, whose candidacy was supported during that period by that party, urged upon Congress the necessity of the reform, and the legislation necessary to make it effective,— Grant, Hayes, Garfield, Arthur and Harrison. True it is that within the party lines, especially before 1883, were men whose reluctant support, still more their avowed hostility, obstructed the reform. But, as we have seen, while they could obstruct, they could not control the party: though, as we have also seen, their unfaithfulness to its pledges bred a popular distrust which brought it to disaster and defeat. “Sweet are the uses of adversity.” The disastrous rout of the Republican party at the polls in November, 1882, was swiftly followed by the enactment of the Pendleton bill, under a suspension of its rules by the Republican majority in a House in which, three months earlier, that bill was not deemed worthy of a Committee report.

It would seem incredible, alike on grounds of party sagacity, of fidelity to party pledges and to the honored leader who urges their fulfillment, and, I do not hesitate to add, of personal honor, that any Republican member of Congress should take part in repudiating the principles and policy of the Civil Service Act. And yet if the press reports are true, not only was the opening of the present session signalized by attacks upon the Civil Service Act,—not merely its methods and its administration, but the policy it embodies,—but later reports state that on the evening of the 11th, a conference of Republican members of the House was held for the purpose of securing changes in the Act, at which a Committee was appointed, with Mr. Grosvenor, of Ohio, as Chairman, who were instructed to examine the bills pending before the Civil Service Committee and

report thereon: and that the expediency of attacking and opposing the civil service items in the pending appropriation bill was considered, though not determined on.

These statements await confirmation, and it would be premature to comment upon them now. If the assaults upon the merit system, so often defeated, are to be renewed, its friends in and out of Congress will be heard from at the proper time. They welcome every honest inquiry into its operation, for in the end the truth is sure to prevail. Indifference, not inquiry, reckless and false assertions, not sincere investigation, have been the obstacles to the reform.

But a certain interest attaches to such statements, in view of a speech made by Mr. Grosvenor, published in the Congressional Record of August 11, 1897, as part of the proceedings of the House on July 19th. It reads like one of those explosive and ephemeral contributions to political literature which, doubtless to the relief of the author, certainly to the comfort of his colleagues, from time to time find vent through the safety valve of a "leave to print." It contains many assertions of a kind familiar to the advocates of the merit system: assertions which — to continue the simile — resemble the clouds and wreaths of vapor which escape from an overcharged boiler, not only in their noisy emergence, extreme tenuity and lack of propelling power, but in their sudden collapse and condensation into harmless drizzle when brought into contact with the pure cold atmosphere of truth.

For example, a letter of George Washington is quoted in which he declined to appoint to "*an office of consequence*" a man whose political tenets were adverse to the measures the general government were pursuing, because, in the judgment of Washington, he would thereby certainly be enabled to embarrass its movements — which "would be a sort of political suicide." And then follows a denunciation of the

Civil Service Act, as contrary to the views of Washington. In fact, that letter (Sparks' Writings of Washington, Vol. XI, p. 74) expressly states that the office which Washington then had in mind was that of *Attorney General* — a Cabinet office, which neither the Civil Service Act nor any scheme of reform yet proposed has ever included. Why did not Mr. Grosvenor mention that fact? The answer to that question is obvious.

But the author of this essay, still speaking in Washington's behalf, further assures us that—

— “ little did he ever dream that the hour would come in American history when the President would have been [*sic*], forced by law to yield the appointing power given him by the terms of the Constitution to a bureau independent of the President, whose orders, if he shall violate them, will lay him liable to indictment and impeachment.”

Mr. Grosvenor, by profession at least, is a lawyer. Does he really imagine, or is he only trying to persuade his confiding constituents, that by any provision of the Civil Service Act the President's appointing power *under the Constitution* is or can be in the slightest degree affected or impaired? There is not the least ground for asserting that any bureau or commission or officer under the Civil Service Act can issue any order which can possibly trench upon the President's appointing power under the Constitution. Is he really ignorant that if that Act did contain any provision inconsistent with that power it would be simply void?

And how shall we reconcile this learned jurist's solicitude for the President's dignity with the following assertion, replete with adjectives, but quite ignoring the fact that every occupant of that office during the past twenty-four years has earnestly advocated the merit system?

“ There has never been a cold, deliberate, dispassionate and candid or just argument made by these men why this

law should be upheld and vindicated. They have never yet dared to touch the true test of the efficiency or inefficiency, the beneficent or non-beneficent character of the administration of this law in the United States."

This sentence follows an uncomplimentary reference to Mr. Logan Carlisle and to Mr. Procter, the present Chairman of the Civil Service Commission. It would probably amuse Mr. Logan Carlisle should he ever learn that Mr. Grosvenor had challenged him to defend the Civil Service Act. Mr. Procter, as we all know, has effectively vindicated it by reference to facts for the absence of which this essay is conspicuous. But the implication is clear that the law is not susceptible of a candid and just defense, and that no proof has been offered by any one, no test has been made, of its efficiency or its beneficent operation. In fact, after making the sneering charge that Mr. Jenckes, in 1867, "played to the public galleries," he ventures upon the assertion (I quote his words) —

"At that time Mr. Jenckes was challenged over and over again to bring forward any reason why such a law was to be passed. *He was never able to do it*, and finally, after his defeat, as above stated, he abandoned the field, so far as Washington and the Departments were concerned and undertook to try and reach inefficiency, as he called it, in the customs and internal revenue service."

This is history, as she is wrote — by Mr. Grosvenor. No one has told him, apparently, that President Grant and his successors, Hayes, Garfield, Arthur, Harrison and McKinley, have made some official declarations upon that subject. He has not, perhaps, had time to read the voluminous and cumulative testimony, year by year, of Cabinet officers, heads of departments, collectors and postmasters in the great cities, gladly given in favor of the greatly increased efficiency and economy in the public service which this

Act has produced. Yet the library of Congress is open to him.

But enough of these samples of statesmanship, culled from a few of the fifty-three closely printed columns devoted to the denunciation of that iniquitous and indefensible law. Still assuming that the press reports of the debate in the House on Tuesday of last week may be trusted, not the least significant feature of it, as reported, is the statement that Mr. Bailey of Texas, the leader of the Democratic party in the House, commended Mr. Grosvenor's utterances against building up an office-holding class in this country -- "a doctrine,-- he said,-- which was almost literally embodied in the Chicago platform." One is distantly reminded of the Arabic proverb -- though I should be far from applying it to any person so estimable as Mr. Bailey and his Democratic colleagues -- "The blessings of the evil genii, which were curses, were upon him."

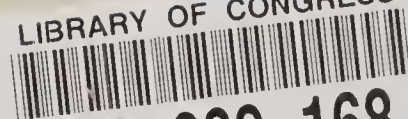
It has been the purpose of this paper to show the true relation of the Republican party to civil service reform, by setting forth the principles and policy to which it stands publicly pledged, as declared by the official representatives of that party. The record speaks for itself. The American people, who, in 1896, accepted the pledges of that party, will sit in judgment upon its fulfillment, or betrayal, of their trust.







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